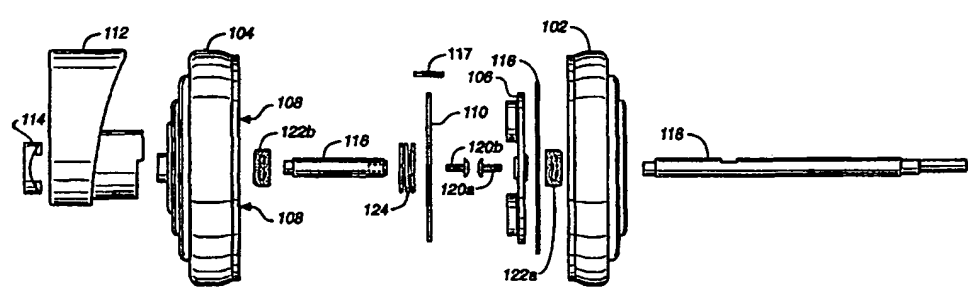


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| (21) International Application Number: PCT/US98/17880 (22) International Filing Date: 28 August 1998 (28.08.98) (30) Priority Data: 08/920,402 29 August 1997 (29.08.97) US (71) Applicant: CYCLE-OPS PRODUCTS, INC. [US/US]; 100 Vandam Street, New York, NY 10013 (US). (72) Inventors: AMBROSINA, Jesse, E.; 40 Whitman Street, Somerville, MA 02144 (US). MARTHALER, Tyler, C.; 2313A Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 (US). PAWELKA, Gerhard, Eduard-Franz; 33 Forest Street, Lexington, MA 02173 (US). QUINTUS-BOSZ, Harald; 9 Ashland Street, Arlington Heights, MA 02174 (US). (74) Agent: SOBON, Wayne, P.; Fish & Richardson P.C., Suite 100, 2200 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (US). | | (81) Designated States: AU, BR, CA, JP, MX, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i> |
| (54) Title: EXERCISE RESISTANCE DEVICE  (57) Abstract <p>A resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus includes a rotatable shaft (118), a rotatable impeller (106) coupled to the rotatable shaft, a sealed housing (102, 104) surrounding the rotatable impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance against the rotation of the impeller and a barrier (110) located between the rotatable impeller and the housing, the barrier and the rotatable impeller being configured to provide for relative movement between the barrier and the rotatable impeller.</p> | | |

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5 EXERCISE RESISTANCE DEVICE BACKGROUND

 The present invention relates generally to a
resistance device for use with exercise equipment, and
more particularly to resistance units for bicycle
10 trainers.

 For many years, bicycle trainers have been used by
bicycling enthusiasts to convert their bicycles for
stationary riding. Rather than ride in cold or rainy
weather, the cyclist can use the trainer to ride indoors
15 and obtain an aerobic, cardiovascular workout. Bicycle
trainers also obviate the need for purchasing a separate
stationary bicycle for those persons who want to
occasionally workout while, for example, reading or
watching television. Regardless of the reasons for its
20 use, a bicycle trainer should be easy to use and, to the
extent possible, simulate bicycle riding on the open
road.

 To provide the user with a workout that simulates
riding on the open road, a bicycle trainer should be
25 designed with a resistance unit that provides increasing
resistance to match the energy output of the rider.
Presently, many conventional bicycle trainers do not
simulate bicycle riding well because of the design
limitations of their resistance units.

30 A typical bicycle trainer has a frame onto which the
user mounts the bicycle. An example of a bicycle
training system is described in United States patent
number 5,611,759. Typically, the rear wheel of the
bicycle is contacted with a roller that is, in turn,
35 connected to a resistance unit.

5

SUMMARY

In general, in one aspect, the invention features a resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus including a rotatable shaft, a rotatable impeller coupled to the rotatable shaft, a sealed housing surrounding the rotatable impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance against the rotation of the impeller, and a barrier located between the rotatable impeller and the housing, the barrier and the rotatable impeller being configured to provide for relative movement between the barrier and the rotatable impeller.

Embodiments of the invention may include one or more of the following features. The rotatable impeller can have at least one vane. The barrier can be located between a stationary impeller and the rotatable impeller. The stationary impeller can have at least one vane. The barrier can allow at least a portion of the vane of the stationary impeller to be exposed to the rotatable impeller. The barrier can have a slot through which the vane of the stationary impeller fits. The barrier can be substantially planar. The barrier can be a substantially circular plate. The invention can include a stationary impeller, the barrier being located between the stationary impeller and the rotatable impeller, the rotating and stationary impellers being substantially circular and planar, each with at least one vane on a surface, the surface of the rotating impeller having its respective vane being oriented to face the surface of the stationary impeller having its respective vane. An adjuster can adjust the relative position of the barrier and the rotatable impeller. The adjuster can be a movable resistance indicator accessible by an operator on the exterior of the housing.

5 In general, in another aspect, the invention features a resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus including a rotatable shaft, a rotatable impeller coupled to the rotatable shaft, the rotatable impeller having at least one vane, a fixed
10 impeller facing opposite the rotatable impeller, the fixed impeller having at least one vane facing the rotatable impeller, a sealed housing surrounding the rotatable impeller and the fixed impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance
15 against the rotation of the impeller, and a barrier located between the rotatable impeller and the fixed impeller, the barrier allowing at least a portion of the vane of the fixed impeller to be exposed to the rotatable impeller.

20 Embodiments of the invention may include one or more of the following features. The relative position of the barrier and the rotatable impeller can be adjustable. Adjusting the relative position of the barrier and the rotatable impeller can change how much of the vane of the
25 fixed impeller is exposed

 In general, in another aspect, the invention features a method for adjusting the resistance of a resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus, where the resistance applying device includes
30 a rotatable shaft, a rotatable impeller coupled to the rotatable shaft, and a sealed housing surrounding the rotatable impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance against the rotation of the impeller, including the steps of turning the rotatable
35 impeller within the fluid within the sealed housing, and adjusting the volume of fluid adjacent to a moving surface of the rotatable impeller.

 Embodiments of the invention may include one or more of the following features. The volume of fluid can be

5 adjusted by changing the relative position of a plate and
the rotatable impeller. The changing of the relative
position can change the distance between the plate and
the rotatable impeller. The distance can change along an
axis substantially normal to the plate. The rotatable
10 impeller can have at least one vane. A stationary
impeller can be located between the rotatable impeller
and the sealed housing, and the stationary impeller can
have at least one vane. At least a portion of the vane
of the stationary impeller can be exposed. A stationary
15 impeller can be located between the plate and the sealed
housing, wherein both the rotating and stationary
impellers are substantially circular and planar, each
with at least one vane on a surface, the surface of the
rotating impeller having its respective vane being
20 oriented to face the surface of the stationary impeller
having its respective vane. An adjuster can be provided
that adjusts the relative positions of the barrier and
the rotatable impeller. The adjuster can be a movable
resistance indicator accessible by an operator on the
25 exterior of the housing.

Advantages of the invention may include one or more
of the following. By varying the volume of resistance
fluid adjacent to the rotatable impeller, or by varying
the surface area of the vanes of a stationary impeller
30 exposed to the fluid, the resistance imparted to the
rotatable impeller can be varied. Users of the fluid
resistance unit can thereby adjust the resistance to
exercise at varying levels of difficulty. Users can vary
the resistance of a fluid resistance unit either
35 continuously or in discrete steps. The adjustment of
resistance can be accomplished easily by changing an
external lever. A fixed fluid resistance unit can have
the amount of its resistance pre-set at a factory, by
simply inserting one of a number of differently spaced

5 barrier plates. The fluid resistance unit can offer progressive resistance to progressively challenge the user. The fluid resistance unit is modular and quiet, and relatively inexpensive to produce.

These and other features and advantages of the
10 present invention will become more apparent from the following description, drawings, and claims.

DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective drawing showing a bicycle
15 trainer with a fluid resistance unit.

Figure 2 is a rear-view drawing of the bicycle trainer of Figure 1 with a bicycle positioned for use by a rider.

Figure 3 is a cross-section of a fluid resistance
20 unit.

Figures 4a through 4c are exploded views of the fluid resistance unit of Figure 3.

Figure 5a and 5b are axial views of an impeller and static fluid baffle for the fluid resistance unit of
25 Figure 3.

Figure 6 is a superimposed phantom view of the impeller and static fluid baffle of Figures 5a and 5b.

Figures 7a and 7b are perspective views of an inner surface of one shell of a housing having an internal
30 fixed impeller.

Figure 8 is a cross-section of a fluid resistance unit.

Figure 9 is an exploded view of the fluid resistance unit of Figure 8.

DESCRIPTION

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Static impeller 108 (which can be essentially a duplicate of the face of impeller 106) is placed opposite impeller 106, and can be formed integrally with the inside surface of second cavity shell 104. Both

5 impellers 106 and 108 are oriented in a generally upright position with respect to first and second cavity shells 102 and 104.

Barrier plate 110, having perforations 111 shaped to accept a number of vanes 109 of static impeller 108, fits
10 over static impeller 108. Plate 110 is movable toward and away from impeller 106 by the action of lever 112 which moves cam disk 114 that in turn moves plate shaft 116 (attached to plate 110) forward and backward along the axis of resistance unit 100. The movement of plate
15 110 relative to impeller 106 exposes more or less of the surface area of vanes 109 of static impeller 108, and also changes the volume of resistance fluid adjacent the surface area of impeller 106. Both of these changes, caused by the movement of plate 110, alter the resistance
20 presented to impeller 106 moving in the fluid. An indication on the exterior surface of second cavity shell 204 can indicate, based upon the location of lever 112, the current relative amount of resistance.

As shown, impellers 106 and 108 are generally flat
25 circular plates having protruding vanes extending from one side. It should be understood that the impellers can have various configurations without affecting the operation of the resistance unit, including designs such as propellers, paddle wheels, and screws.

30 Spring 124 seats between plate 110 and the inside surface of second cavity shell 104, providing a force for returning plate 110 to its initial position, roughly half-way between the movable impeller 106 and static impeller 108. Screws 120a and 120b attach impeller 106
35 to fluid shaft 118 and plate 110 to plate shaft 116, respectively. Seals 122a and 122b seat around fluid shaft 118 and plate shaft 116, helping to reduce, if not eliminate, fluid leakage. Also, first and second cavity

5 shells 102 and 104 are held in place by screws 124, and are sealed by o-ring 126.

A variety of resistance fluids can be used in the fluid resistance unit 100. Although not an operational requirement, it is preferred that the resistance fluid be
10 non-toxic. Generally, the resistance fluid should have a viscosity in the range of 1 to 500 cs. Larger impellers can be required if the viscosity of the fluid is small, to achieve a similar imparted resistance. The resistance fluids that can be used include silicone compounds,
15 vegetable oils, mineral oils, water-based lubricants, etc.

In a preferred embodiment, the fluid used in the resistance unit is a silicone compound, specifically, a pure silicon fluid with a 50 cs viscosity, because of its
20 relatively high boiling point of about 400°F.

If water is used as the resistance fluid, a small amount of water soluble oil can be added to the fluid to provide lubricity and as an anti-corrosive agent. It is important that the chosen resistance fluid have a low
25 coefficient of compression.

The amount of resistance fluid used to fill the housing should be sufficient to cover the vanes of the impeller. The housing can be left partially unfilled leaving a small volume of air for thermal expansion of
30 the fluid when the trainer is used, otherwise the seal to the housing may be damaged. It is possible to replace the fluid used in the impeller unit to vary the resistance that can be obtained.

Referring to Figures 5a, 5b, 6, and perspective
35 Figures 7a and 7b, impeller 106 has a number of vanes 107a through 107d, while static impeller 108 also has a number of vanes 109a through 109d. Impeller 106 and static impeller 108 can each have any number of vanes (including none), depending on the size of the impeller

5 and impeller housing, and their respective number of
vanes can be the same or different, and can be the same
shape or different. In the present embodiment, four
vanes are used, each spaced apart equally at
approximately 90° around the circumference of each
10 impeller 106 and 108. The vanes have inner concave
surfaces in the direction of rotation. The curved
surfaces move the fluid by a scooping action that
provides resistance during rotation.

The vanes can be made in a variety of shapes to
15 provide the necessary resistance in the fluid. The lead
surface of the vanes can be less streamlined to provide
more resistance or more streamlined to provide less
resistance as the impeller rotates in the fluid. It is
within the scope of the invention to use vanes that have
20 lead surfaces that are flat, trapezoidal, curved, etc.
It is preferred that the lead surface of the vanes be
offset at an angle from the radius of the impeller.

The impellers are preferably made of metal using
conventional casting methods. Other materials can be
25 used including refractory ceramics, plastics, etc.

By exposing more or less of the surface area of
vanes 109 of static impeller 108, and by also reducing
the volume between plate 110 and impeller 106, by moving
plate 110, resistance unit 100 can vary the amount of
30 drag experienced by impeller 106 rotating within its
fluid.

Referring to Figure 6, a superimposition of impeller
106 and static impeller 108 (shown in phantom looking
through impeller 106) shows that vanes 107 and 109 are
35 curved in opposite directions, increasing the amount of
drag experienced by impeller 106 as it rotates. Vanes
107 and 109 do not necessarily need to be cupped or in
opposite directions (e.g., vanes 107 and 109 can be flat,
or cupped away from each other). Vanes 107 protrude

5 through respective slots 111 in plate 110. Alignment pin 117 aligns plate 110 with static impeller 108 plate 110 moves up and down vanes 107.

Referring to Figures 8 and 9, another resistance unit 200 includes first and second cavity shells 202 and 10 204, which contain a rotatable impeller 206, a static impeller 208 (which can be, as above, fabricated integral to the inside of second cavity shell 204), and a fixed plate 210 which, as with plate 110 above, has perforations for fitting over vanes 209 of static 15 impeller 208. In fluid resistance unit 200, however, fixed plate 210 is set at a fixed distance along the vanes of static impeller 208 (that is, at a fixed distance along the axis of resistance unit 200) by standoffs 211, so that a certain amount of surface of 20 vanes 209 of static impeller 208 can be set exposed to the movement of the fluid flowing around vanes 209 and vanes 207 of impeller 206. Essentially resistance unit 200 operates in similar fashion to resistance unit 100, but with plate 210 fixed at a certain point along the 25 resistance unit axis.

The two types of units 100 and 200 can be manufactured with a number of similar parts, and a button 230 can be used in fixed fluid resistance unit 200 to cover the hole in the housing that, in adjustable fluid 30 resistance unit 100, provides the access for lever 112, cam disk 114, and plate shaft 116 to otherwise cooperate to change the distance of plate 110. At the factory, a fixed plate 210 having a particular length of standoffs 211 can be selected from a number of fixed plates 210 35 having different length standoffs 211, and can be inserted to provide a selected amount of resistance to impeller 206. This allows for easily setting the manufactured fluid resistance unit 200 to any of a number of resistances, as desired. Resistance unit 200 can be

5 configured to allow end users to exchange one fixed plate
210 for another, to change the resistance of unit 200.

Other embodiments of the invention are within the
scope of the claims. For example, the movable plate can
be placed over the vanes of the rotating impeller,
10 variably exposing its vane surface area, to change the
frictional forces imparted to the impeller, and such a
movable plate and impeller arrangement can be used with
or without a corresponding static impeller. The rotating
or stationary impellers can move instead of the plate,
15 thereby changing their relative positions. Both sets of
vanes of an impeller and static impeller can be covered
with either movable or fixed disks to expose selected
amounts of vane surface area. The vanes of either the
impeller or the static impeller can be adjustable, such
20 that the angles at which the vanes "attack" the
surrounding fluid can be changed, changing the imparted
resistance. The impeller can be just a disk without
vanes, and its resistance can be adjusted by exposing
more or less of its surface area to its surrounding
25 fluid. The shaft attached to the moving impeller can
pass through the static impeller.

5 What is claimed is:

1. A resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus comprising:

 a rotatable shaft;

10 a rotatable impeller coupled to the rotatable shaft;

 a sealed housing surrounding the rotatable impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance against the rotation of the impeller; and

 a barrier located between the rotatable impeller and
15 the housing, the barrier and the rotatable impeller being configured to provide for relative movement between the barrier and the rotatable impeller.

2. The device of claim 1 wherein the rotatable
20 impeller has at least one vane.

3. The device of claim 1 further comprising a stationary impeller, the barrier being located between the stationary impeller and the rotatable impeller.
25

4. The device of claim 3 wherein the stationary impeller has at least one vane.

5. The device of claim 4 wherein the barrier
30 allows at least a portion of the vane of the stationary impeller to be exposed to the rotatable impeller.

6. The device of claim 4 wherein the barrier has a slot through which the vane of the stationary impeller
35 fits.

7. The device of claim 1 wherein the barrier is substantially planar.

5 8. The device of claim 7 wherein the barrier is a substantially circular plate.

 9. The device of claim 1 further comprising a stationary impeller, where the barrier being located
10 between the stationary impeller and the rotatable impeller, the rotating and stationary impellers being substantially circular and planar, each with at least one vane on a surface, the surface of the rotating impeller having its respective vane being oriented to face the
15 surface of the stationary impeller having its respective vane.

 10. The device of claim 1 further comprising an adjuster that adjusts the relative position of the
20 barrier and the rotatable impeller.

 11. The device of claim 10 wherein the adjuster comprises a movable resistance indicator accessible by an operator on the exterior of the housing.

25 12. A resistance applying device for use with an exercise apparatus comprising:
 a rotatable shaft;
 a rotatable impeller coupled to the rotatable shaft,
30 the rotatable impeller having at least one vane;
 a fixed impeller facing opposite the rotatable impeller, the fixed impeller having at least one vane facing the rotatable impeller;
 a sealed housing surrounding the rotatable impeller
35 and the fixed impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid that provides resistance against the rotation of the impeller; and
 a barrier located between the rotatable impeller and the fixed impeller, the barrier allowing at least a

5 portion of the vane of the fixed impeller to be exposed
to the rotatable impeller.

13. The device of claim 12 wherein the relative
position of the barrier and the rotatable impeller is
10 adjustable.

14. The device of claim 13 wherein adjusting the
relative position of the barrier and the rotatable
impeller changes how much of the vane of the fixed
15 impeller is exposed.

15. A method for adjusting the resistance of a
resistance applying device for use with an exercise
apparatus, where the resistance applying device includes
20 a rotatable shaft, a rotatable impeller coupled to the
rotatable shaft, and a sealed housing surrounding the
rotatable impeller, the sealed housing containing a fluid
that provides resistance against the rotation of the
impeller; comprising the steps of:

25 turning the rotatable impeller within the fluid
within the sealed housing; and
adjusting the volume of fluid adjacent to a moving
surface of the rotatable impeller.

30 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the volume of
fluid is adjusted by changing the relative position of a
plate and the rotatable impeller.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the changing the
35 relative position changes the distance between the plate
and the rotatable impeller.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the distance
changes along an axis substantially normal to the plate.

5 19. The method of claim 15 wherein the rotatable
impeller has at least one vane.

 20. The method of claim 15 further comprising
providing a stationary impeller located between the
10 rotatable impeller and the sealed housing.

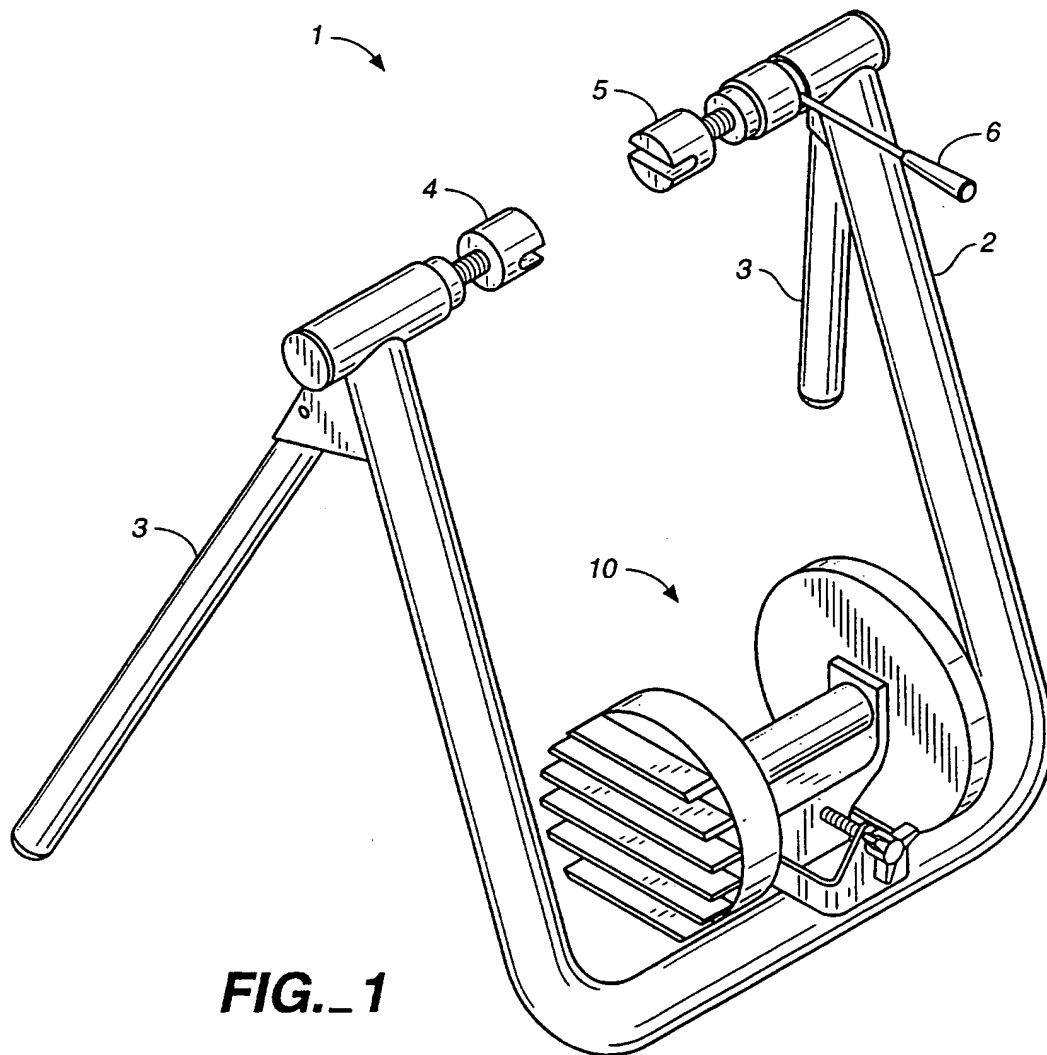
 21. The method of claim 20 wherein the stationary
impeller has at least one vane.

15 22. The method of claim 21 further comprising
exposing at least a portion of the vane of the stationary
impeller.

 23. The method of claim 16 further comprising
20 providing a stationary impeller located between the plate
and the sealed housing, wherein both the rotating and
stationary impellers are substantially circular and
planar, each with at least one vane on a surface, the
surface of the rotating impeller having its respective
25 vane being oriented to face the surface of the stationary
impeller having its respective vane.

 24. The method of claim 16 further comprising
providing an adjuster that adjusts the relative positions
30 of the plate and the rotatable impeller.

 25. The method of claim 24 wherein the adjuster
comprises a movable resistance indicator accessible by an
operator on the exterior of the housing.



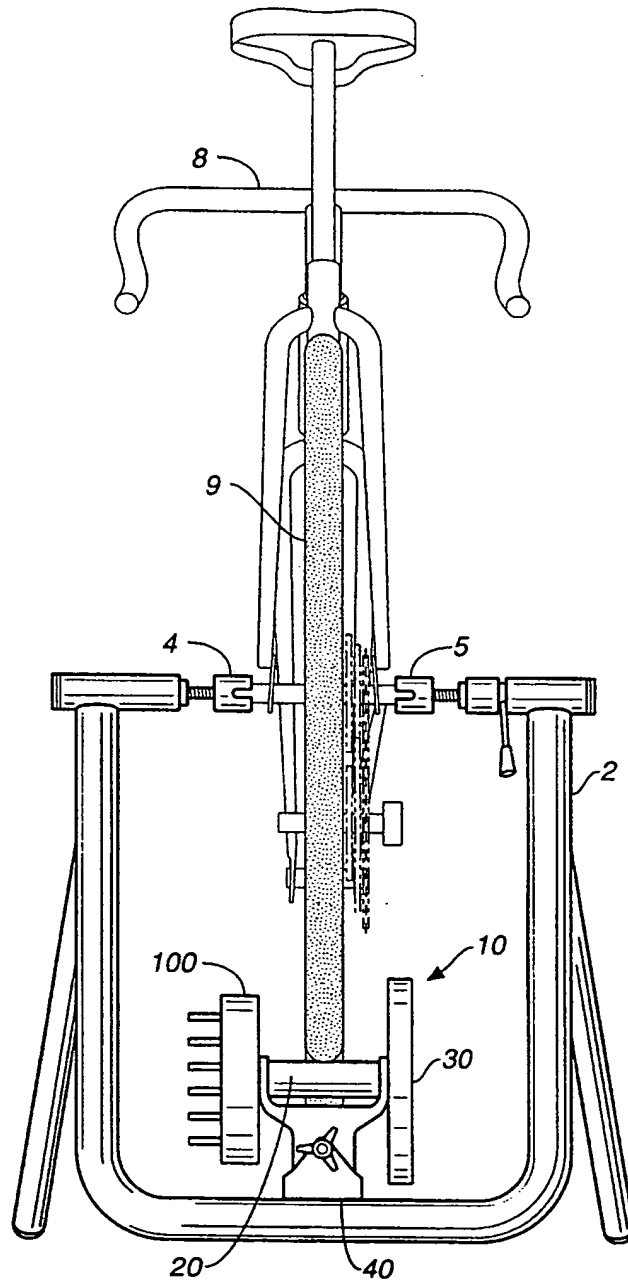
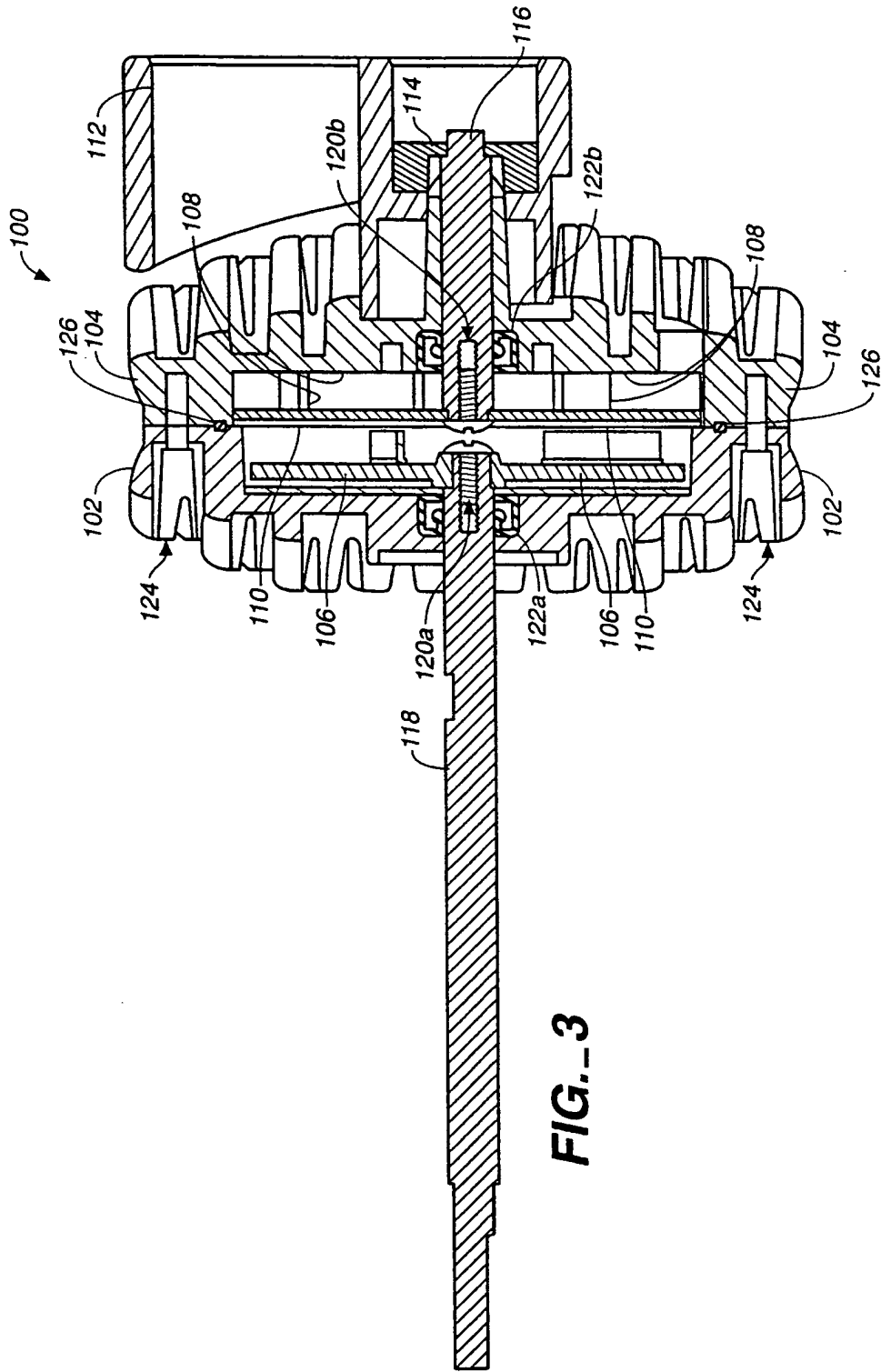


FIG. 2

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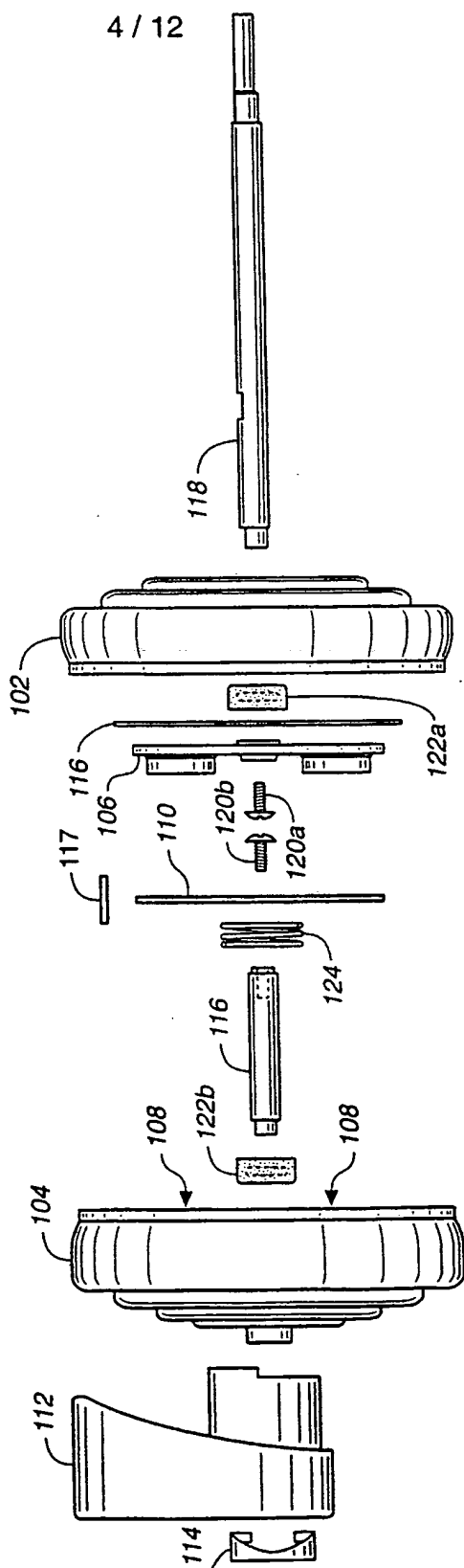
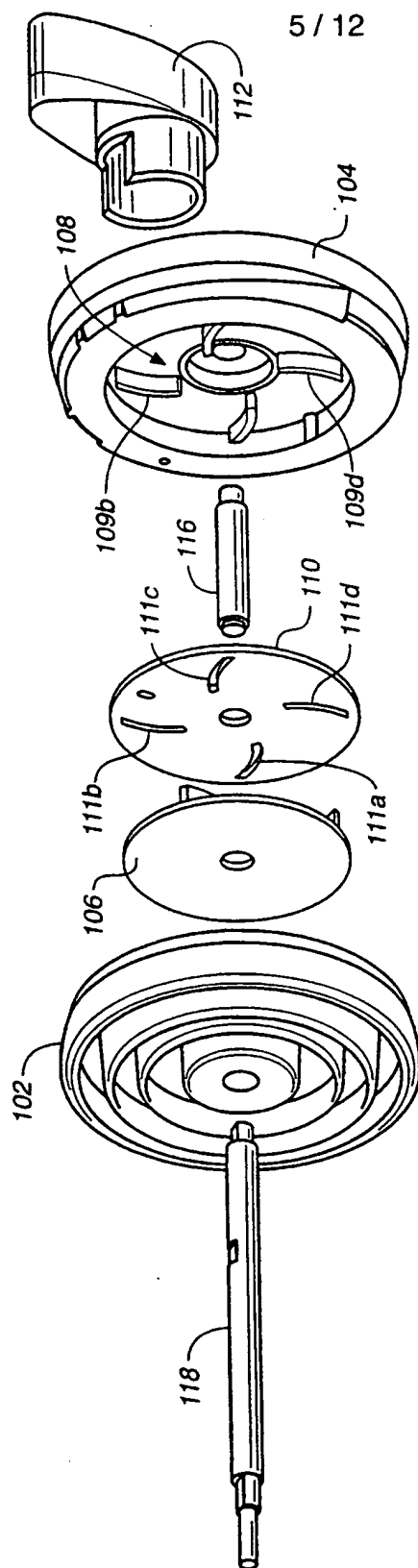
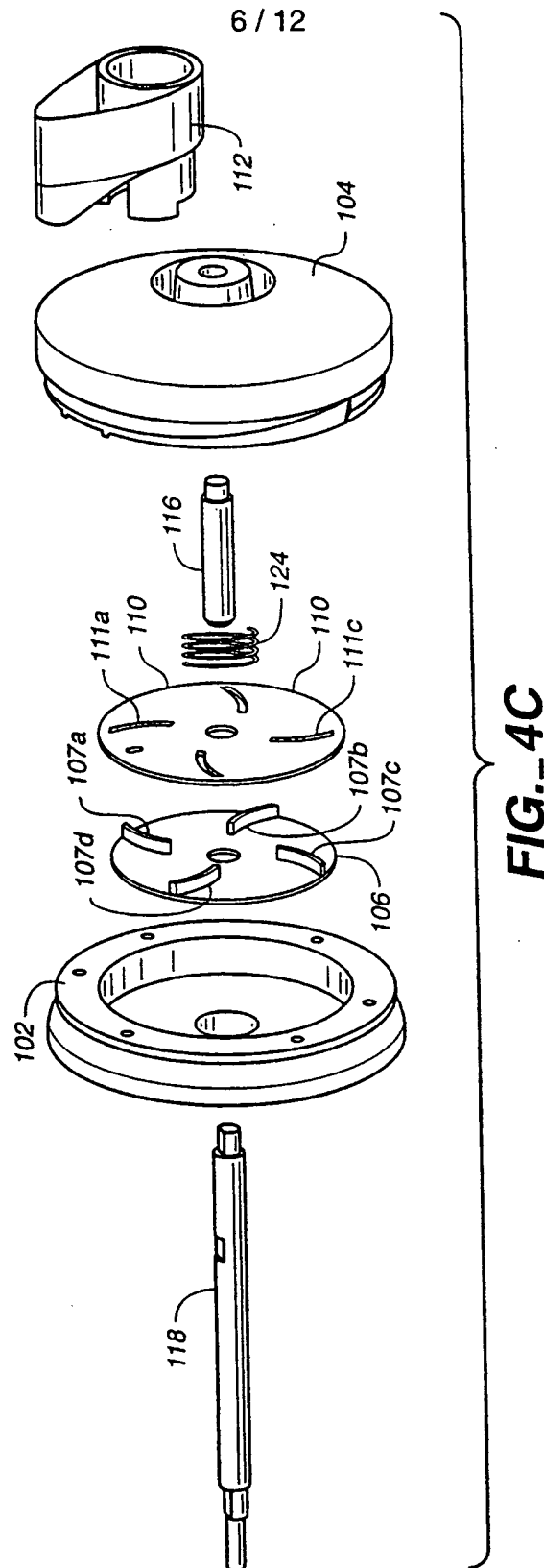


FIG. 4A



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FIG. 4B



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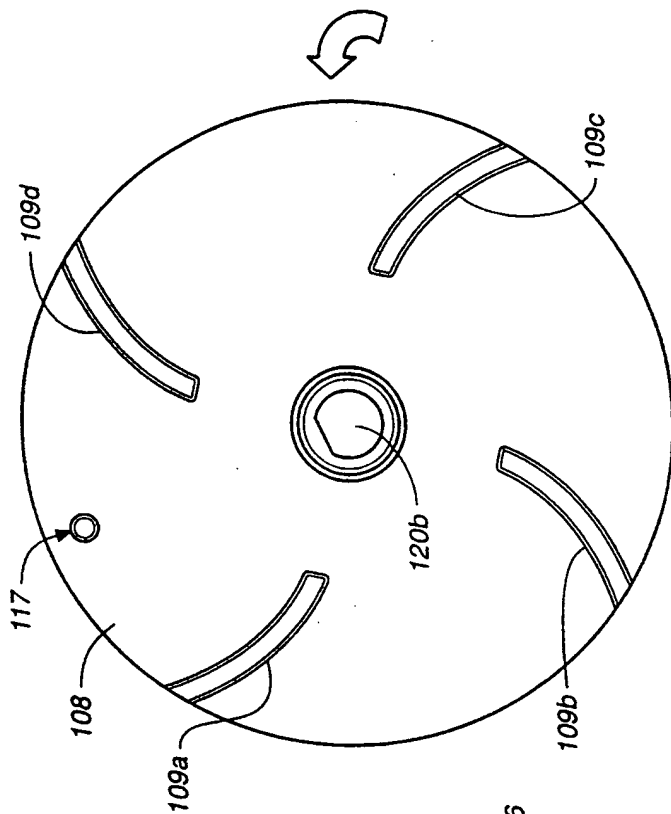


FIG. 5B

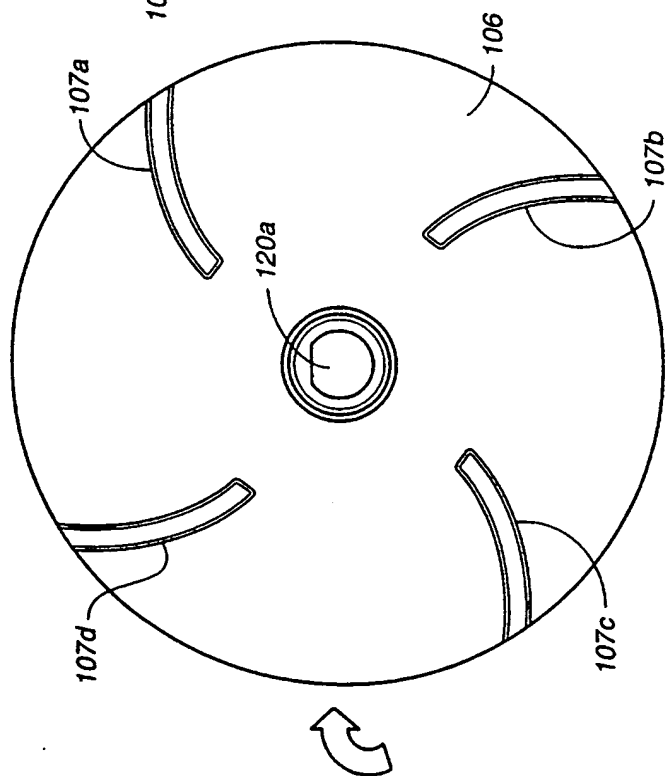


FIG. 5A

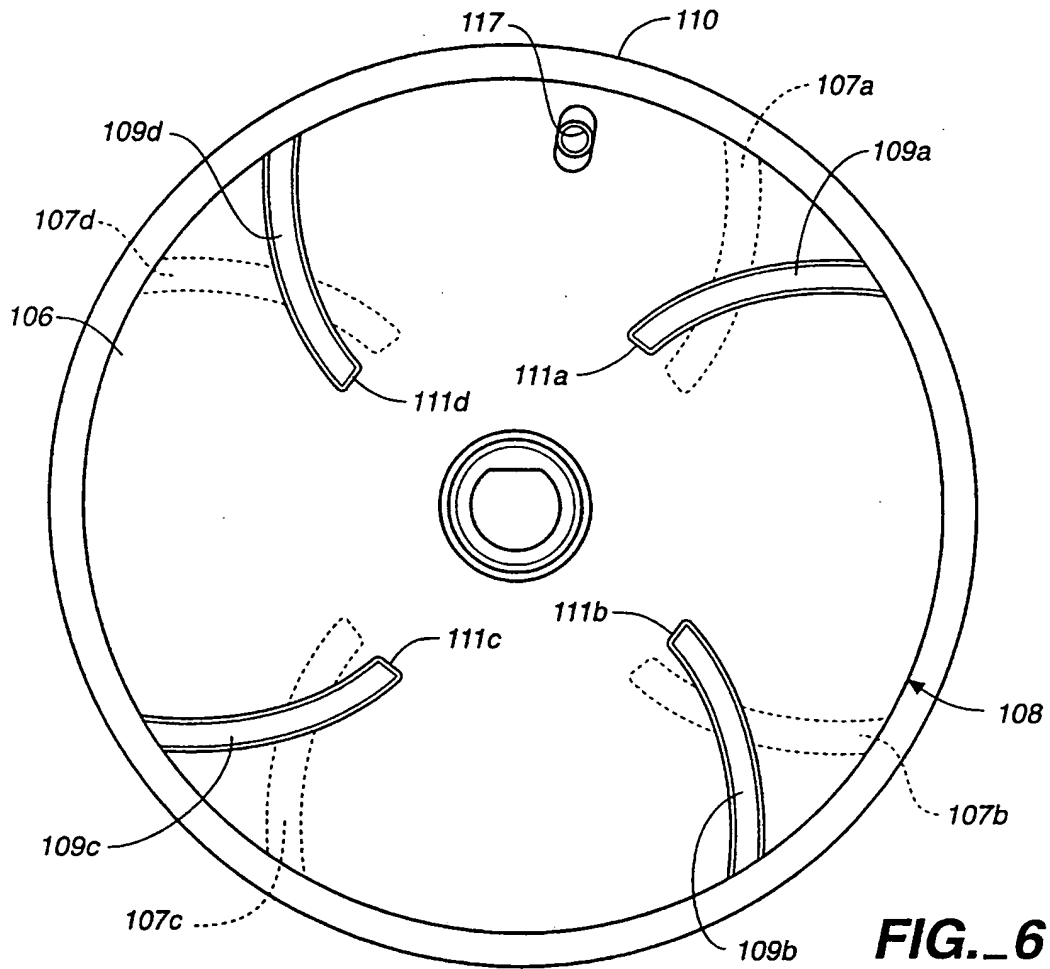


FIG._6

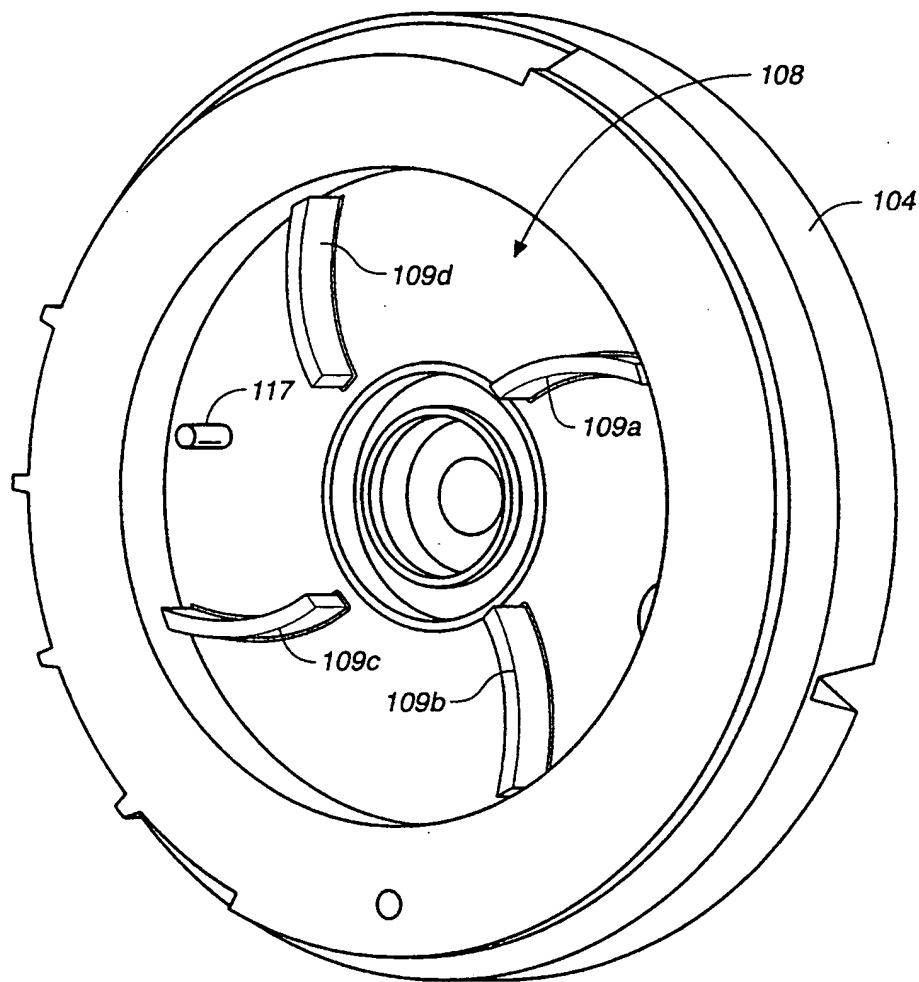


FIG._7A

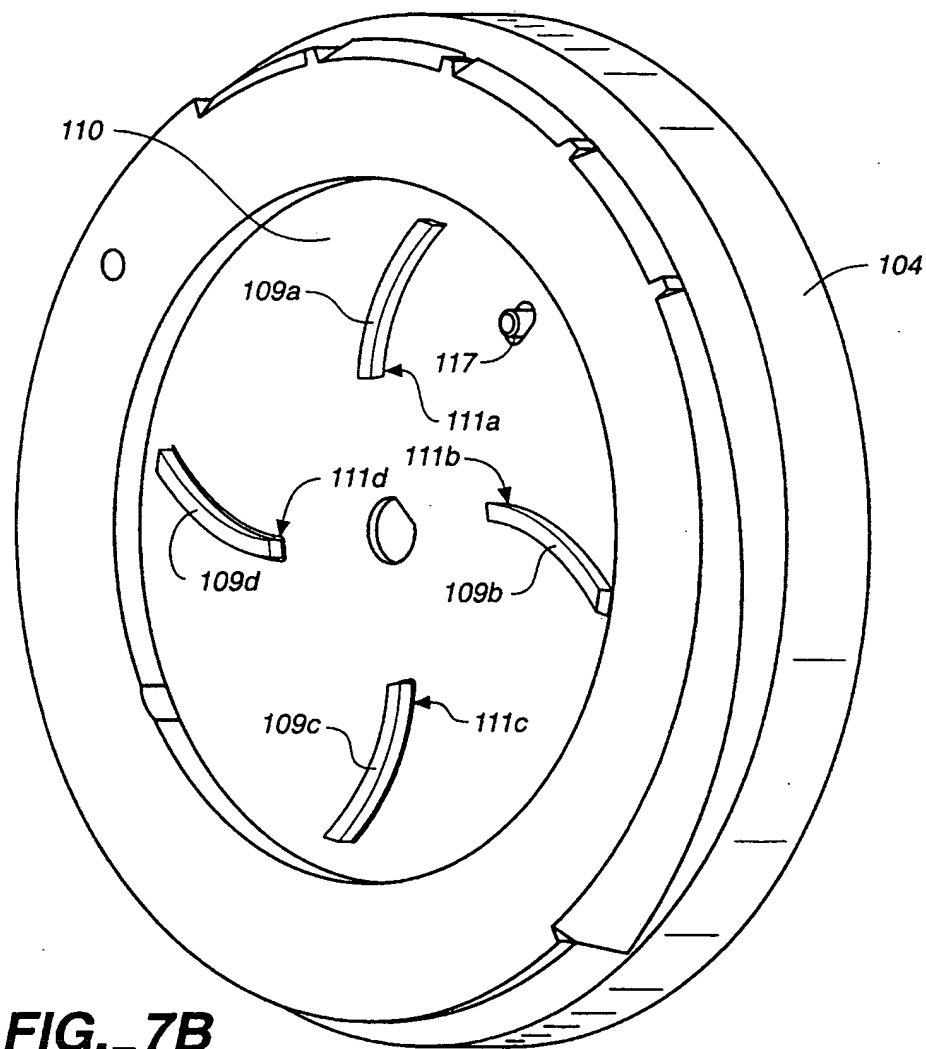


FIG. 7B

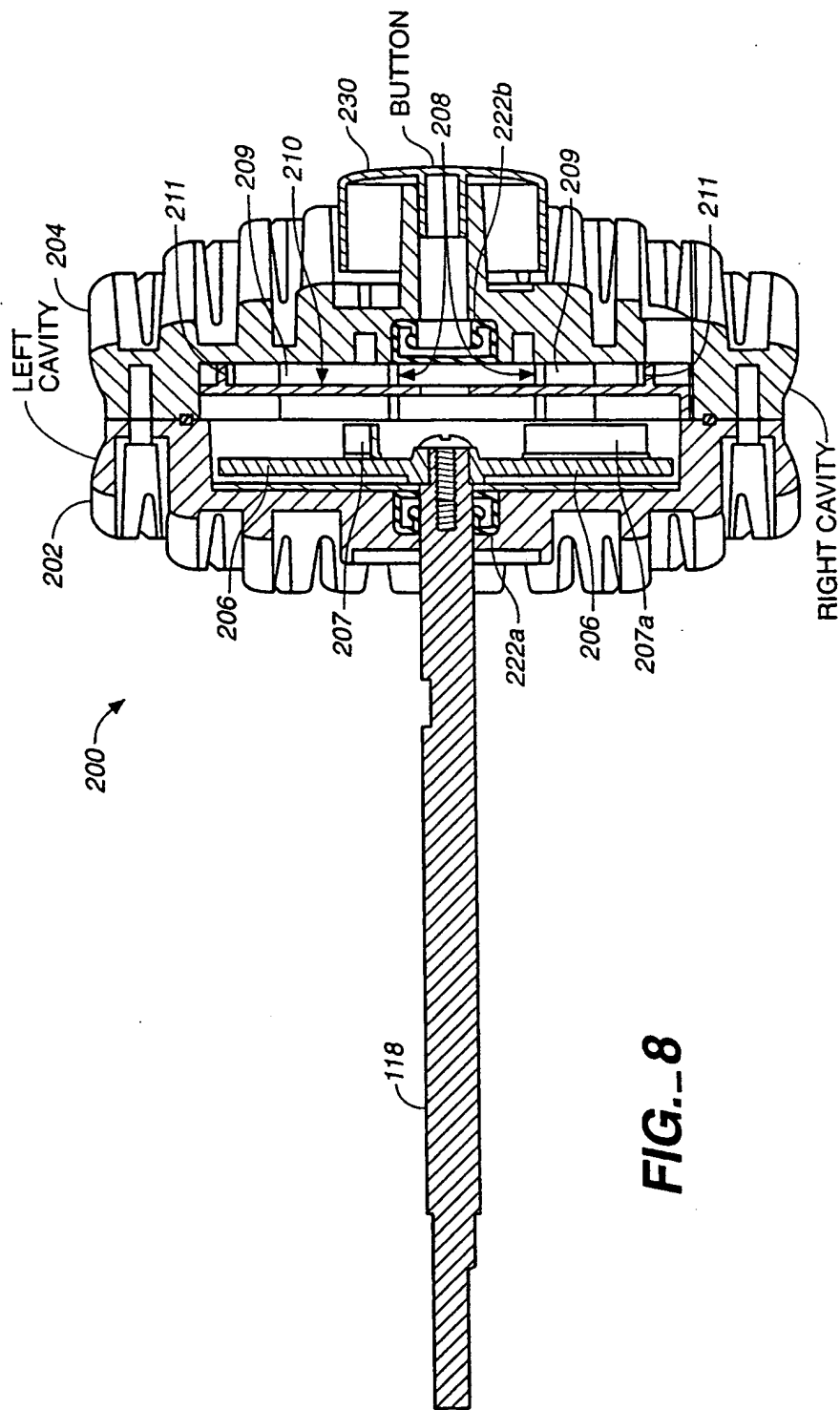
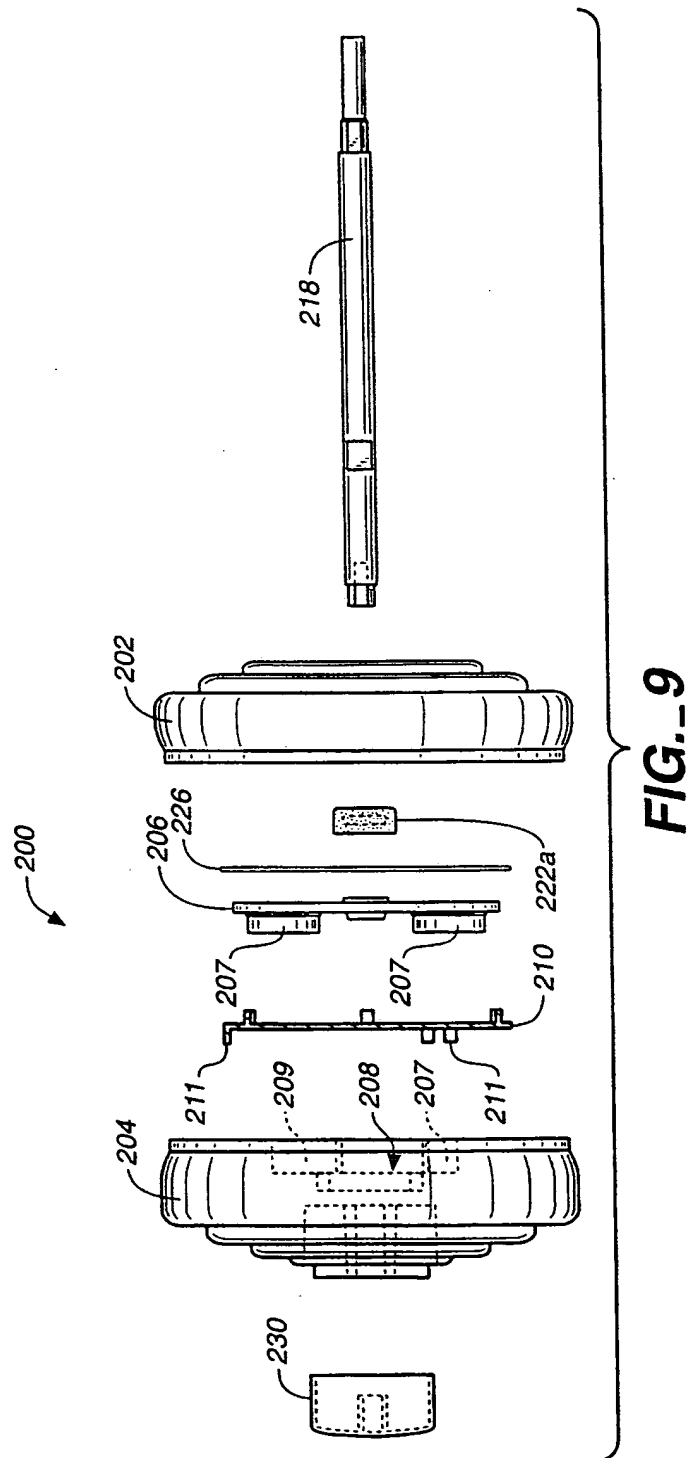


FIG. 8

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/17880

| A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC(6) : A63B 22/06 US CL : 482/11, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 112, 113 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC | | |
|---|--|---|
| B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) U.S. : 482/57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 11, 112, 113 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) | | |
| C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | |
| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
| X --- Y | US 5,611,759 A (ZEH et al.) 18 March 1997 (18.03.97), col. 4, lines 53-62, and Figs. 4 and 5. | 1, 2 ----- 3, 4, 7-11, |
| Y | US 4,171,802 A (STOECKER) 23 October 1996 (23.10.96), Figs. 2 and 3. | 3, 4, 9, 20, 21, 23 |
| X --- Y | US 5,542,507 A (WARCHOCKI et al.) 06 August 1996 (06.08.96), Figs. 3 and 4a; col. 2, lines 61-62; col. 3, lines 5-9, 22-34 and 44-46. | 15-19, 24 ----- 11, 20, 21, 23, 25 |
| Y | US 3,953,025 A (MAZMAN) 27 April 1976 (27.04.76), Fig. 4. | 11, 25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex. | | |
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